Pirate Stories:

(True Pirate Stories)

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

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Black Bartelmy's Ghost

Black Bartelmy was an evil, surly buccaneer who murdered his wife and children and went to sea with a band of pirates as nasty as he. He roamed the Atlantic coast, murdering and pillaging and laying waste to the countryside as he passed. By the time he approached Cape Forchu in Nova Scotia, Black Bartelmy had a ship loaded with treasure; five hundred chests had he full of gold and jewels and goblets and mighty swords.

A thick Fundy fog lay over the bay as the ship approached, and the treacherous Fundy tide soon took hold of the evil man's ship. The crashing, churning waters of the Roaring Bull, that dangerous ledge of rocks near Cape Forchu, took the pirates ship and smashed its hull.

But Captain Bartelmy spotted land to the starboard side of the ship. He and his trusted mate Ben the Hook had the crew load up the escape boat with every treasure chest they could fit. Then the bold pirate had his first mate murder the other buccaneers so they would not have to share the treasure with them. Ben the Hook crouched just out of sight in the rocking escape boat and slit each man's throat with his hook as the seaman bent to place his burden in the hold. Then Ben threw each body over the side of the ship into the churning waters below so that the next pirate would not sense a trap when he came forward with his treasure.

When the treasure was loaded into the boat, Bartelmy and Ben the Hook rowed into the calmer waters of the cape. They searched for a place to bury their treasure. Finding a large cave, they piled each chest inside and then covered the entrance with rocks. As Ben the hook rolled the last boulder into place, Bartelmy thrust a sword deep into his chest, twisting it with an evil laugh, and watched as his mate fell dead at his feet.

Knowing that he had to leave this remote spot or starve, the evil pirate captain walked along the edge of the water, searching for a town or a harbor

where he might row the escape boat. But Black Bartelmy soon found himself mired in quicksand with no one to save him. Only the gulls heard his dying curses ringing over the cape as he sank down and down into the mire and was engulfed.

One stormy night soon after the pirate's death, the keeper of the local lighthouse saw a flare going up in the direction of the Roaring Bull. Thinking it is a ship in trouble; the keeper called together a lifeboat crew and launched their boat into the icy waters, heading for the Roaring Bull. But as they approach the vessel in distress, they saw an ancient galleon with tattered sails. Its decks were piled high with treasure chests spilling over with gold. Astride the deck is a solitary man in black. The evil pirate grinned wickedly down at them, gesturing grandly with his cutlass. As the breakers overwhelmed their boat, the last thing the keeper and the rescuers heard was the sound of Black Bartelmy's ghost, laughing.

They say that the ghost of Black Bartelmy continues to haunt the Cape and the Roaring Bull to this day, and that any rescue crew summoned to save a vessel off the Roaring Bull should take every precaution, because the distressed vessel might not really be there.

Blackbeard's Ghost

The nefarious pirate Blackbeard (who's real name was Edward Teach) was a tall man with a very long black beard that covered most of his face and extended down to his waist. He tied his beard up in pigtails adorned with black ribbons. He wore a bandolier over his shoulders with three braces of pistols and sometimes he would hang two slow-burning cannon fuses from his fur cap that wreathed his head in black smoke. Occasionally, he would set fire to his rum using gunpowder, and he would drink it, flames and all. Many people thought he was the Devil incarnate.

For twenty-seven months, Blackbeard terrorized the sailors of the Atlantic and the Caribbean, ambushing ships and stealing their cargo, killing those who opposed him, often attacking in the dim light of dawn or dusk when his pirate ship was most difficult to see. He would sail under the flag of a country friendly to the nationality of the ship he was attacking, and then hoist his pirate flag at the last moment. When prisoners surrendered willingly, he spared them. When they did not, his magnanimity failed. One man refused to give up a diamond ring he was wearing and the pirate cut the ring off, finger and all. Once Blackbeard blockaded Charleston, South Carolina with his ships, taking many wealthy citizens hostage until the townspeople met his ransom. Later, Blackbeard ran one of his ships - the Queen Anne's Revenge - aground. Some say he did it on purpose because he wanted to break up the pirate fleet and steal the booty for himself.

In November of 1718, Blackbeard retreated to his favorite hideaway -- called Teach's Hole -- off Ocracoke Island. There, he hosted a wild pirate party with drinking, dancing and large bonfires. The party lasted for days, and several North Carolina citizens sent word to Governor Alexander Spotswood of Virginia. Governor Spotswood immediately ordered two sloops, commanded by Lieutenant Robert Maynard of the Royal Navy, to go to Ocracoke and capture the pirate.

On November 21, 1718, Maynard engaged Blackbeard in a terrible battle. One of Maynard's ships were between Blackbeard and freedom. Blackbeard sailed his ship - the Adventure - in towards shore. It looked like the pirate was going to crash his ship, but at the last second the ship eased through a narrow channel. One of the pursuing Navy ships went aground on a sand bar when they tried to pursue the Adventure. Blackbeard fired his cannons at the remaining ship and many of Maynard's men were killed. The rest he ordered below the deck under cover of the gun smoke, hoping to fool the pirates into thinking they had won. When the pirates boarded the ship, Maynard and his men attacked the pirates.

Outnumbered, the pirates put up a bloody fight. Blackbeard and Maynard came face to face. They both shot at each other. Blackbeard's shot missed Maynard, but Maynard's bullet hit the pirate. Blackbeard swung his cutlass and managed to snap off Maynard's sword blade near the hilt. As Blackbeard prepared to deliver the death-blow, one of Maynard's men cut Blackbeard's throat from behind. Blackbeard's blow missed its mark, barely skinning Maynard's knuckles. Infuriated, Blackbeard fought on as the blood spouted from his neck. Maynard and his men rushed the pirate. It took a total of five gunshots and about twenty cuts before Blackbeard fell down dead.

Maynard seemed to think that the only way to ensure that Blackbeard was dead was to remove his head. They hung the head from the bowsprit and threw the pirate's body overboard. As the body hit the water, the head hanging from the bowsprit shouted: "Come on Edward" and the headless body swam three times around the ship before sinking to the bottom.

From that day to this, Blackbeard's ghost has haunted Teach's Hole, forever searching for his missing head. Sometimes, the headless ghost floats on the surface of the water, or swims around and around and around Teach's Hole, glowing just underneath the water. Sometimes, folks see a strange light coming from the shore on the Pamlico Sound side of Ocracoke Island and know that it is "Teach's light". On night's that the ghost light appears, if the

wind is blowing inland, you can still hear Blackbeard's ghost tramping up and down and roaring: 'Where's my head?

Dem Bones

My granny was told as a child that Captain Kidd, knowing the law was on his trail, traveled up the Jersey coast looking for the perfect spot to bury his stolen booty. And he found it near a grove of gnarled, wind-swept pines on Sandy Hook. One moonless dark night, the Adventure Galley slid silently into harbor at Sandy Hook. Before the wondering eyes of two hidden watchers, a crew of scurvy buccaneers armed with cutlasses and pistols had rowed boatload after boatload of heavy chests into the shore. They were accompanied by a tall, proud man with red-whiskers and a cocked hat that the watchers recognized at once as the bold leader Captain Kidd. The captain led his men away from shore, and they disappeared with them into the grove of pines. The pirates were gone along time; long enough, according to those who watched, to bury any amount of treasure. They came away before dawn and rowed back to the Adventure Galley and sailed into the last vestiges of the dark night.

Of course, the eager watchers kept their knowledge quiet and scurried down to the pine grove a few days later, armed with lanterns and shovels. But nary a gold coin found they, and in frustration, they shared their tale with other good folks in the region. After that, there was not a night when the pine grove did not see someone digging fervently with a shovel. After a few decades of this, the pine grove gave up the ghost and died away completely. By my granny's time, there was nothing left of the spot save a few stunted trees, some wind-swept grass, and on certain dark nights, Dem Bones.

Dem Bones are the skeletal crew of Captain Kidd. According to my granny, they come sailing up in a ship made of shadows. The ship moves silently up the coast at the dark of the moon, and anchors near the shores of Sandy Hook. Two or three boats are lowered from her side, and they are filled up with the eager forms of glowing skeletons wearing cocked hats and tattered buccaneers garb. Around their waists are belts full of pistols and long cutlasses. The biggest of Dem Bones - the one that is probably the first mate - has a skeletal parrot perched on his shoulder.

Dem Bones carry heavy trunks full of treasure onto the shore and scatter them all around the place where the pine grove once stood. Then the pirate crew hauls out kegs and kegs of whiskey and one of the skeleton's takes out a fiddle. A phantom fire is lit on the sand, and Dem Bones start such a rowdy singing and dancing that the noise would wake the dead - if they weren't already awake. When they are exhausted from the dancing, the glowing skeletons collapse on the sand and start telling stories about the ships they have captured and the treasure they have amassed. Some of Dem Bones open the big trunks and take out jewels and ropes of pearls and adorn themselves. Others toss gold coins back and forth as if they were a child's ball. At the darkest part of the night, just before dawn, Dem Bones pack up the trunks and row back to the ship of shadows. One by one, the glowing skeletons disappeared into the hold and the ship draws anchor and sails away.

Ghost Ship of Captain Sandovate

When Captain Don Sandovate voyaged from Spain to the New World in search of treasure, he found gold in abundance. But among his crew there were many sailors who did not wish to share the new-found wealth with the monarchs of Spain. On their journey up the Atlantic Coast, the sailors mutinied and imprisoned their captain, tying him to the main mast and refusing to give him food or drink. Day after day, the captain lay exposed to the hot sun of summer, his body drying up as the treacherous sailors worked around him. Finally, his pride broken, Don Sandovate begged: "Water. Please. Give me just one sip of water." The mutineers found this amusing, and started carrying water up to the main mast and holding it just out of reach of their former captain.

In the terrible heat of a dry summer, the captain did not survive long without water. A few days after the mutiny, the captain succumbed to heat and thirst. The new captain, a greedy Spaniard with no compassion in his soul, left Don Sandovate tied to the mast, his body withering away, while the ship turned pirate and plundered its way up the coast. But Providence was watching the ruthless men, and a terrible storm arose and drove the ship deep into the Atlantic, where it sank with all hands, the body of Don Sandovate still tied to the broken mast.

Shortly after the death of the mutineers-turned-pirate, an eerie ghost ship began appearing along the coast, usually in the calm just before a storm. It had the appearance of a Spanish treasure ship, but its mast was broken, its sails torn, and the corpse of a noble-looking Spaniard was tied to the mast. The ship was crewed by skeletons in ragged clothing. As it passed other ships or houses near the shore, the skeletons would stretch out bony hands and cry: "Water. Please. Give us just one sip of water." But none can help them, for they are eternally doomed to roam the Atlantic, suffering from thirst in payment for their terrible deeds against their captain and the good people living along the Atlantic coast.

Ocean-Born Mary

Elizabeth and James Wilson were Irish immigrants from Londonderry, Ireland. In 1720 they set sail for America. They had been granted some land in Londonderry, New Hampshire, and were hoping to start a new life there.

As they neared Boston, Elizabeth went into labor and gave birth to a daughter. While she was giving birth, a strange vessel accosted the ship. They were fired upon and were forced to heave to. Their ship was boarded by a band of swarthy pirates. Their leader, a surprisingly young man not yet twenty years of age, was dark, handsome, and ruthless. He was called Don Pedro, and his English was flawless as he ordered all the captives killed.

At this fatal juncture, the cries of a newborn baby could be heard from down in the hold. Startled, Don Pedro ordered the captain to take him to the child. After gazing for a long time at the tiny girl, Don Pedro said to Elizabeth: "If you name this child after my mother - Mary - I will spare the lives of everyone on this ship." Frightened by the fierce pirate, Elizabeth hastily agreed.

Don Pedro sent one of his men back to the pirate ship. When the man returned, he was carrying an armload of gifts. Don Pedro presented these to Elizabeth. Fingering a green brocaded silk with an odd look of tenderness on his ruthless face, he said: "This is for my Mary's wedding dress." Then he and his men returned to their ship and departed.

Soon after their ship landed safely in Boston, James Wilson died. His widow and daughter went to Londonderry to claim the land in his name. Ocean-born Mary grew into a tall, beautiful red-haired woman. In 1742, wearing a green brocade gown made from the silk given to her by Don Pedro, Mary was married to James Wallace. They had five children, four sons and a daughter. Sadly, after the birth of his fourth son, James Wallace died.

Around that time, Don Pedro, having retired from the sea, decided to build a home in New Hampshire. Having never forgotten his little Ocean-born Mary, Don Pedro began seeking to discover what became of her. Finding her a widow in Londonderry, he married her and brought her and her children to live in his grand mansion in Henniker. He gifted Mary with a stately coach and four, in which Mary would often be seen riding around the countryside. One by one, her sons grew up, married, and settled down near Mary.

One day, coming in from an errand to town, Mary saw Don Pedro and one of his retired pirates carrying a large black trunk to the orchard in back. She heard the sounds of digging, and then silence. Don Pedro came back to the house alone, and they never spoke of the matter. But later, he told Mary that when he died, she should bury him and the treasure under the hearthstone. A year later, Mary came home one evening to an empty house. She started searching for her husband and found Don Pedro in the orchard, stabbed to death with a cutlass. Mary buried Don Pedro with his treasure under the hearthstone and there they lay to this day.

After her death in 1814, Mary's ghost began to haunt the house where she had once lived with her pirate-husband. People would see a tall, beautiful red-haired woman come walking down the long staircase. Sometimes, she could be seen standing beside an upper window, or throwing something down the well. Others had witnessed Mary driving in her coach and four up to the front door of the house. The house was finally abandoned and later torn-down, although the house where her son Robert lived still stands and is sometimes called the Ocean-born Mary house.

Palatine

The Palatine gleamed in the sunlight as she set out with a full crew, a long list of passengers, and a hull full of merchandise for the American Colonies the winter of 1750-1751. Certainly, there was no indication that morning of the destiny fate had in store for her.

It was not until the first of the storms blew the ship off course that the passengers began to sense the trouble brewing under the surface between the captain and his crew. By the time the storms had ended, the captain was dead, murdered by his crew, and the passengers were prisoners. During the days which followed, the sailors forced the passengers to pay exorbitant prices for a bit of bread and some water to drink.

One morning, the passengers awoke to find that the crew had stolen all of their money and stores and had abandoned the ship. Terrified, they could do nothing but ride out the next series of storms sent by the devils which rule the Atlantic in winter.

The Palatine came to ruin just off of Block Island. The shore folk bravely faced the storm to rescue the starving passengers from the wreck. Then they set fire to the ship so that it would not endanger any passing ships. But as the ship burned, the shore folk heard a wild scream. A mad woman, confined on the ship during the voyage, had been left on board!

Every year since then, on the day of the tragedy, the Palatine reappears off the shore and is wrecked and burned before the eyes of any who watch for her.

The Revenge of Emmy Tot!

Piracy was very much a man's world and women were not allowed aboard pirate ships; it was part of the 'Pirate's Code'. However, there were one or two notable exceptions where women did go to sea and when they did, they often proved to be more than a match for the men, Anne Bonney and Mary Read were famous examples. Here is a true story of another young woman who was taken to sea against her will, and how she dealt with her situation.

Emmy Tot was born into Scottish aristocracy. Christened, Emmaline Tottington, at the age of nineteen, she was taken into employment as Lady in Waiting to the Countess of Eglinton in the North Ayrshire district of Cunninghame, of which Irvine is the predominant town. There is, in the centre of Irvine, a rather gruesome tribute to Emmy's exploits. Standing on top of a lantern, over the doorway of the Eglinton Arms Hotel, is the figure of a girl, holding in one hand a sword, dripping blood, and in the other, a severed head.

As the story goes, The Earl of Eglinton was hosting a banquet at Eglinton Castle, just outside Irvine. In those days, Irvine was a busy seaport and often there were merchant ships of varying size and from different countries docked in the harbour. One such was the 'Amsterdam', a vessel commanded by Jan Van der Goot, a small time privateer, sailing under the Dutch flag. It was the Earl's custom to invite to his banquets, the master of any ship that happened to be in the harbour at the time and Van der Goot was included on this occasion.

The moment that he set eyes on Emmy, he was captivated. He asked the vivacious lady in waiting to join him on his ship, but she was not interested in the Dutchman and refused. Van der Goot however, was a determined man and through the night, he returned with four of his crew, broke into her room and abducted her, carrying her back to his ship. They took her to Van der Goot's cabin and locked her in, setting sail out of Irvine almost

immediately. Once at sea, the cowardly captain stayed on deck drinking with his men, while Emmaline pondered her fate in the cabin below.

Several hours later and very much the worse for drink, Van der Goot returned to his cabin and found his captive, curled up on the floor in the corner, apparently asleep. Totally drunk, he threw himself, fully dressed onto his bed and was soon snoring. But Emmaline in fact, was wide awake and biding her time. She waited maybe half an hour to make sure that her captor was sleeping deeply before quietly getting to he feet. She moved over to where the captain was stretched out on his bed. Then carefully drawing his dagger from its scabbard, she thrust it into his chest, piercing his heart! For a moment his eyes opened in surprise. Then, just as quickly, they closed. Van der Goot was dead!

Emmaline was not yet finished. She drew out the captain's sword and with a few hacking blows, cut his head from its body! Dragging her grisly prize out of the cabin, and still carrying the sword, dripping with blood, she made her way onto the deck. At the point of the sword, she forced the helmsman to ring the ship's bell, summoning the crew on to the deck. It was nearly dawn and most of the men were sleepy eyed and still half-drunk. But they soon sobered up when they saw Emmaline holding up the severed head of their captain! She demanded that they turn about and take her immediately back to Irvine. They were too shocked to argue and did as they were told.

The Earl of Eglinton was so impressed by Emmy's bravery that as a tribute, he added the figure of a girl holding a sword and a severed head to the crest of his coat of arms, and there it remains to this day!

The Pirate's Curse!

Tom Sweeney was a pirate. Not a pirate captain, or particularly fierce. He was just a sailor who preferred the life of a buccaneer and enjoyed the company of hard drinking ruffians! He had seen plenty of action over the years, including the experience of being with Henry Morgan at the Siege of Maracaibo.

It was said that Sweeney was born of gypsy stock, although no one knew for sure. Even Sweeney himself did not know exactly where he was born! The one thing that made Sweeney stand out from the rest of his shipmates, was the bear. The bear had been with him for about fifteen years. He said that he had won it in a game of 'shove ha'penny' when it was a cub. But now, fifteen years on, it was a fully-grown Russian Black Bear standing eight feet tall on its hind legs! Sweeney took it everywhere and it was said that the bear could down a jug of ale with the best of them! The bear was devoted to Sweeney and he to it. They were inseparable – Until the fateful day that they arrived in Liverpool.

The ship was tied up at the dockside. Sweeney, some of his shipmates and the bear had gone ashore. They were all in a quayside alehouse, drinking and playing cards with some of the Liverpool locals. As the afternoon wore on, the drinking became heavy and tempers began to fray. An argument developed between a local fisherman and one of Sweeney's pals. In the fight that followed, the fisherman got stabbed.

Now the fight had nothing to do with Sweeney, he was at the bar at the time and was not involved. But the following day, because those in the alehouse had remembered the bear, he was picked out as the ringleader. He was thrown into jail and the bear taken from him. He never saw it again!

Sweeney was outraged at the injustice, and distraught at the loss of his beloved companion. So angry in fact that he placed a curse on the City of

Liverpool! A curse, that is unbroken to this day. It is known as ‘The Curse of Sweeney’s Bear’. From that day to this very moment, every child born in the City of Liverpool is born with a ‘bare’ behind!

Captain Daniel and the Priest

Buccaneers were by nature a lawless and mostly God-less breed. Religion had little place aboard a pirate ship, although there were occasions when a captain might sometimes feel the need to communicate with the Almighty.

There is the story of one Captain Daniel, a Frenchman who found it necessary to call in at a small island in the Caribbean to stock up on food and drink. He met up with some of the frightened locals. He assured them that he meant them no harm and would in fact pay for anything that his men took. It so happened that there was a priest on the island and it occurred to Daniel that some religious instruction might be good for his crew and so he invited the priest to conduct a service aboard the ship while the required provisions were being sought.

The terrified clergyman made a start and though doing his best was being continually interrupted by coarse and vulgar remarks made by a drunken member of the crew. Captain Daniel shouted at the man in equally coarse terms and instructed the sailor to shut up. The poor priest, by this time almost too nervous to carry on, tried again but was once more interrupted by the same foul mouthed sailor.

Captain Daniel shook his head in despair, drew his pistol and shot the man in the head. The priest almost fainted, but was reassured by the captain that everything would now be all right. “Don’t worry, Father”, he said, “The fellow was a rogue who didn’t know how to behave – I’ve punished him to teach him some manners".

Captain Bartholomew Roberts and the Unfortunate Sea-Cook!

Captain Bartholomew Roberts was taking on extra crew for a voyage to West Africa. He liked to recruit personally and was sat at a small desk on the quayside at Port Royal, Jamaica. He was questioning a fifty-year old sea cook who had a wooden leg, an eye patch and a hook at the end of his left arm.

“So how did you lose your leg?” he asked the old salt. “We was sailin’ round the Horn in a great swell and I fell overboard. A shark ‘ad me leg before me mates hauled me out of the water!”

“I see”, said Roberts, “and what about your hand?” he pointed to the hook. “”We was attackin’ a merchantman – pistols a-blazin’, swords a-swingin’ and blow me if one of me own didn’t cut me ‘and off by accident!”

“Well that was unfortunate. Tell me how did you manage to lose an eye?” asked an amused Roberts. “It was a seagull droppin’ that caused that sir”, said the sailor, almost apologetically. “A seagull dropping caused you to lose an eye? That’s amazing!” said the captain.

“Aye, well it was me first day with the hook!” answered the unfortunate man.

The Legend of the Bell Rock

This is a story of two brothers. One took to religion, the other took to the sea. One became a monk, then a prior and ultimately an abbot. The other, a sailor, a sea captain and eventually a notorious pirate! For he was as wicked as his brother was good.

Although each was aware of the other's occupation, they had little personal contact. The Abbot prayed often for the sea robber. Who, in turn despised his brother's chosen calling and took every opportunity to ridicule and embarrass him.

The Abbot was incumbent at the Abbey of Aberbrothock, some twenty miles to the north east of Dundee. Now just a ruin, the Abbey is located in the centre of the small coastal town that bears its more modern name of Arbroath.

Because of the abbey's proximity to the North Sea, the Abbot had become increasingly concerned about the number of ships that were being wrecked upon a small rocky sandstone island just beyond the Firth of Tay. Inchcape; for that is the island's name, was particularly dangerous owing to its rising, even at low tide, no more than a few metres above the surface of the sea. And at high tide and in storms was virtually submerged and invisible. "What could be done", wondered the Abbot, "to protect shipping and the lives of the sailors who were constantly at risk when leaving and entering the firth?"

He called for a meeting between ship owners and leading citizens of Perth and Dundee, many of whom were directly affected by the loss of shipping and valuable cargo. After some lengthy discussion, it was decided that a large bell be fixed onto the rock. The ringing of the bell in the wind would alert the crewmen aboard the vessels of the dangers lying ahead.

Collections were made and in three months they had sufficient funds with which to purchase a great bronze bell from a bell foundry in Amsterdam. Workers were sent out to the rock to build a strong gantry on to which the bell would be hung.

At last all was ready and on a particularly bright and sunny day, a flotilla of small boats set out to attach the bell to its housing. The provosts of both Dundee and Perth were in attendance, as was the Abbot and other leading clergymen as the floating procession made its way towards the rock.

In a short time the bell was in place; hymns were sung, prayers were said and the bell was blessed. The boats returned to Aberbrothock where a banquet had been prepared to celebrate the success of the mission. It was not long before the deep ringing tones of the bell in the distance told those on land that it was indeed doing its job. The Abbot gave thanks for God's guidance. Many disasters would be averted and more importantly, lives would be saved. Inchcape was soon to become known to mariners, far and wide as 'The Bell Rock'.

Meanwhile, far away in the warm climate of the Mediterranean, the younger brother was robbing and pillaging ships and towns along the Barbary Coast of North Africa. The news of his brother's praiseworthy work he greeted with scorn and disdain. He laughingly claimed that he put the fear of God into more people in a month than the worthy Abbot would in his lifetime! Nevertheless, he was irritated that the humble priest was receiving more recognition than was his own notoriety. He planned to do something about it.

Six weeks later, the pirate ship, loaded with booty headed for Scotland, where there were rich and unscrupulous merchants who would pay handsomely for the gold, silver and jewels plundered from the Barbary Coast.

As the ship approached the firth, the bell could be clearly heard. Even though the sea was calm, the gentle breeze was enough to cause the clapper to strike the inside of the bronze casing. The captain gave orders for a boat to be lowered and with six of his crew, he rowed to the rock. Once there, it took less than ten minutes to unhook the bell and roll it into the sea! It sank silently, disappearing below the waves.

The captain gazed at the spot and said almost to himself, “The next visitors to Inchcape won’t be blessing the Abbot!” His crewmen looked uneasily at one another, each aware of the dreadful act to which they had been party. They returned to the ship and sailed on to Dundee where the captain completed his unlawful business dealings.

Two days later, he was ready to set sail again, back to the Barbary Coast. This time the sea had a heavier swell, as they sailed out of the firth, heading for the North Sea. The wind became a gale and it began to rain. The crew was nervous and mostly silent. Although they were rough and ready buccaneers, they were also superstitious. They each felt acutely aware that a dreadful price would have to be paid for the wickedness of their captain’s actions. They were right to be afraid.

As the storm grew in strength, visibility was reduced to nil and control of the vessel became impossible. Suddenly, with a grinding crunch, the ship came to a shuddering stop and immediately lurched onto its side. They had hit the rock! There had been no warning bell; for had it not been rolled into the sea two days earlier? Water poured over the ship as it began to break up. The crewmen screamed in terror as they fell into the waves. In a short time, there was nothing left of the ship or its crew, save one lone survivor.

He had a strange tale to tell. He said that he saw the captain disappear into the sea and at that very moment he swore that he had heard the ringing of a bell; as though the Devil himself was bidding the captain, “Welcome!”

The bell was never replaced and it was not until more modern times that a lighthouse was built on the rock. The Inchcape Lighthouse, or as it is more famously known, ‘The Bell Rock Lighthouse’ has protected shipping ever since.

But even today, sailors will tell you that when the sea in the Firth of Tay is rough, there are times that they can hear the ringing of a deep-toned bell. And when they look into the sky, they see a ghostly sailing ship with one solitary figure pacing the deck!

Pirate Jack Warrender and the Standing Stones

There is a remote group of islands in the Pacific Ocean called the Cocos Islands. Outside a cave on one of the islands are two large, standing stones. A local legend claims that the stones were once two villainous buccaneers who were petrified by Inca magic!

The story begins with Jack Warrender, a notorious pirate captain. Warrender was a nasty piece of work. Not so threatening as Blackbeard, but dangerous just the same. He was sly, deceitful, and suspicious of everyone. Thrown off a buccaneer ship for stealing rum, he gathered together a few cut throat friends and set himself up as captain of his own ship.

Before being expelled from his previous ship, he took part in a raid on Lima Cathedral. Lima is the capital city of Peru and its cathedral was famous for the priceless Inca treasure that it housed. Most valuable, was the fabulous ‘Sword of Pachacuti’. Said to have belonged to the famous Inca warrior king. The sword had a solid gold handle and was reputed to possess magic powers! The stolen treasure was taken to the Cocos Islands, some seventy miles Northwest of Lima, and hidden inside a cave.

Not long after he had taken possession of his own vessel, Warrender heard that his earlier ship had been lost at sea, capsizing with all hands. Realising

that perhaps now he was the only one who knew the whereabouts of the Lima treasure, he decided to set sail and recover it for himself. He had no intention of sharing his knowledge with his crew, so when they anchored off the coast of the island that held the treasure, he told the men that they was just stopping to take on fresh drinking water.

Late that night, when he thought that everyone was asleep, he lowered a boat and rowed ashore. He did not realise that two of his crew, two who had sailed with him before and knew him well, were quietly following. Warrender silently pulled his small boat up the beach and secured it to a large stone. He then set off to find the cave where the treasure was hidden. He had already decided against removing all of the treasure on this visit. He would just select a few pieces that he could easily hide on the ship and then sell on to some rich merchant or politician. He could always come back later for other items.

The night was cool as he made his way through the trees and into a clearing, on the other side of which was a steep cliff face. He paused for a moment, and then feeling a surge of excited anticipation, his eyes found the gap in the cliff that he recognised as the entrance to the treasure cave! Totally unaware of the two pairs of eyes that were watching his every move, Warrender made his way towards the cave entrance. Once inside, he stopped again to get his bearings and to allow his eyes to become accustomed to the gloom. Then he moved forward towards the rear of the cave where he knew that the treasure was hidden.

He peered behind a large boulder. There it was! Gleaming and sparkling in the glimmering shafts of moonlight that shone in through cracks in the cliff face. His eyes fell on the sword. He picked it up. Then he noticed six giant silver coins. They were commemorative ‘pieces of eight’. He decided to take them as well. Clutching his prize closely to his chest, he made his way out of the cave. The two crewmen, who had followed him, confronted him outside!

“Hello Jack”, said one. “We wondered where you were going, so we followed you”. “Seems as though we’ve got some treasure to share!” Chuckled the other. He uncoiled a length of rope that was wrapped around his waist. They took the sword and coins from their captain. Then, after tying the ropes around the sword, they handed it back to him while they continued wrapping the rope around Warrender’s waist.

They however, had not heard of the sword’s reputed magic power. Warrender had. He took the sword by the handle, drew it clear of the rope and raising it high in the air cried out, “Pachacuti! Pachacuti! Pachacuti!” In that moment, the two mutinous crewmen dropped the coins and froze. Then before his eyes, they both turned to stone!

Terrified by what he had witnessed, Warrender picked up the coins and took them and the sword back to the cave. He then returned to his ship and sailed away the following day. He of course, never mentioned the incident and the rest of his crew merely assumed that the two missing buccaneers had jumped ship. The treasure was eventually recovered and returned to Lima Cathedral.

Now whether you believe my story or not, the natives of the Cocos Island swear that it is true and will happily take you to the cave and show you the two standing stones which guard its entrance!

The Treasure of Tortuga!

Just off the north-west coast of the Caribbean Island of Hispaniola (now divided into the two countries of Haiti and The Dominican Republic), lies a small rocky island which, from a distance, looks like a giant tortoise rising above the surface of the sea. The Spaniards in fact, named this island, ‘Tortuga’, which means, ‘Tortoise’.

During the summer of 1713, five notorious pirate captains met on the island to make an agreement never to attack each other. As a gesture of good faith, each took with them a bag of personal treasure to be buried on the island. If any of the five were to be killed, their treasure was to be divided between those who remained.

Each buried his treasure in an individual plot and a map was drawn, showing the locations. There were just five copies of the map, of which each captain had one. Within two years of the meeting, all five pirates were dead! Either killed in action or taken by the authorities and executed.

There were many rumours about the meeting on Tortuga, but no one knew the whereabouts of the treasure or who held any of the maps. The story was consigned to myth and legend.

Then one day, in June, 1926, a young boy, the son of a merchant seaman, found an old leather wallet on the beach near where he lived in Cornwall. Upon opening the wallet, he discovered two pieces of parchment. One of them carried a roughly drawn map and the other, some strange instructions.

He took the package to his father, who soon recognized the map as being that of Tortuga. He had of course heard the old legend of the five pirate captains and thought that these two old tattered documents might indeed be directions to the buried treasure!

He took them to the appropriate authorities who verified the age and validity of the papers and an expedition was mounted to find the treasure!

When they arrived in Tortuga, they found that the map led them to five stepping stones that had crossed a small river, long since dried up. The stepping stones however were still in place and upon lifting each one, there sure enough was an old leather satchel!

There was some disappointment. Four of those rascally pirates had cheated! Only one contained anything of worth – a bag of gold doubloons!

When valued, the doubloons were worth many thousands of pounds – the contents of the rest of the satchels were valueless.

The boy who found the wallet on the beach and his father were well rewarded and the doubloons, plus the worthless treasure are now on display at their local museum.

Pirate Stories:

(True Pirate Stories)